

famous Wilmington race riot, how bravely they stood up and faced the enemy.”⁶³

As to the actual number of dead, contemporary sources and subsequent accountings have varied greatly. “There has always been a tendency to minimize or magnify the casualties” said Harry Hayden, explaining that many victims were “removed from time to time from places of hiding under buildings, houses and shanties and in the woods” after dying from their wounds.⁶⁴ The *Wilmington Evening Dispatch* predicted that an accurate count of the dead would never be recorded. Thomas Clawson, editor of the *Wilmington Messenger*, stated that 10 to 12 blacks died

⁶³ Zachary overlooked the obvious, that the men shot in the back did not bravely face the enemy. They were, instead, likely running for their lives from the fighting and were possibly unarmed targets. An article in the *Washington Post* noted that “many of the victims of the election race riots in that place [Wilmington] were taken to the city hospital to have their wounds dressed or their dying moments made easy.” The article pointed out that the hospital was on the outskirts of Wilmington and that, during the riot, the “female white assistants, nurses and others took fright and left the hospital in a body.” Therefore, not only was the hospital overrun with emergency patients, but many of its staff members were not on hand to assist. Dr. R. E. Zachary, “Gun-Shot Wounds – With Report of a Case of Gun-Shot Wound of Stomach” *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina, Forty-Sixth Annual Meeting*, (Observer Printing and Publishing House: Charlotte, NC, 1899), 134; *Washington Post*, November 14, 1898.

⁶⁴ At this point in his narrative, Hayden also provided reports from other eyewitnesses as to the dead. He pointed out that the Coroner held 14 inquests although that many has not been documented due to lack of records. He also recorded the memory of a young man who saw a Cowan Livery Stable wagon drive by his house with twenty dead blacks piled on like “cordwood” and that he later saw twenty bodies at a black mortuary. As an example of the hidden murders, Hayden recounted that a Red Shirt claimed to have witnessed the shooting deaths of six men near the Cape Fear Lumber Company plant and their remains buried in a nearby ditch. Hayden, *WLI*, 92-94.

and 2 whites were seriously wounded. George Rountree believed that 6 or 7 blacks were killed. Willie Parsley believed that 12 to 15 were killed. Fayetteville businessman Peter Mallett recorded in his daybook that 8 blacks and several whites were reported dead as a result of the riot. James Worth wrote his wife that “there couldn’t have been less than 18 or 20 blacks killed and scores wounded.” African American restaurant owner John D. Franklin recalled that he worked with coroner Jacobs and saw 4 dead men at the funeral home plus one man dead at his home on Sixth between Brunswick and Bladen. Franklin also recalled that 2 black men died at the hospital.⁶⁵ Rev. J. Allen Kirk wrote that the streets were “dotted” with dead, and a white man informed him that he saw 10 men at the undertaker’s office. Kirk also noted that some dead were found later because of the “stench and miasma that came forth from their decaying bodies under their houses.” Kirk claimed that an eyewitness told him she believed that more than 100 people killed. In Raleigh it was reported on the twelfth that 10 were dead outright and that at least 25 were seriously wounded.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁵ *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898; Clawson, “Recollections and Memories;” Rountree, “Memorandum.” “I felt sure that in the event of a collision there would be several hundred [killed] but I overestimated their courage or foolhardiness.” Willie to Sallie, [November 12, 1898], Eccles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; “War commenced/Race at Wilmington today—8 negroes reported killed and several whites—Col. Waddell and best citizens in []. More trouble feared tonight/ Russell French and other scum did keep out of the way—negroes suffer.” Daybook, Peter Mallett papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; James Worth to Josephine, November 126, 1898, James S. Worth Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; *Contested Election Case*, 19-20.

⁶⁶ Kirk and Hayden both acknowledged that mortally wounded men fled the fighting and were later found